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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TEL AVIV 005019

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SUBJECT: GAZA DISENGAGEMENT: GEN. DANGOTT UPDATES

AMBASSADOR ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH PALESTINIANS

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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SUMMARY

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1. (C) DEFMIN Mofaz's Military Adviser, General Eitan Dangott, updated Ambassador August 12 on status of ongoing GOI-Palestinian negotiations on post-disengagement issues, including the disposition of settler housing, the degree of authority for Gaza, improvement in passages, the Gaza disputed border, greenhouses, the Philadelphi Strip, and the legal status of the evacuated area of the West Bank. Dangott said that the two sides are close to agreement on the principles for the dismantlement of settler housing, but that the GOI needs USG help in (a) assuring that Egypt agrees to take unused rubble from the demolished homes; and (b) securing either EU or World Bank agreement to serve as the dismantlement program manager. On passages and access, Dangott said discussions on the Karni border crossing are moving forward, but the Palestinian side is delaying discussion of Erez because they want to discuss the border issue. The Israelis are assembling a pilot program for Gaza-West Bank convoys and will review it with the Palestinians within two weeks.

2. (C) Dangott expressed frustration with the Palestinian side's efforts to front-load the border demarcation as an issue. The GOI believes Egypt is behind this tactic. On Philadelphi and the security customs envelope, Dangott said Israel needs more time to discuss the issues with the Palestinians and fine-tune a way ahead that is acceptable to the Knesset. On the status of the northern West Bank areas that will be evacuated, Dangott said NGO and Palestinian concerns were essentially unfounded, as the area's status will evolve with time and Palestinian security performance. END SUMMARY.

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Settler Housing

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3. (C) Dangott said that Palestinian Authority Minister of Civil Affairs Muhammad Dahlan had agreed, after meeting with Omar Suleiman in Egypt, that private companies will remove the rubble from the demolition of settler homes. Egypt will send a small team to Gaza to discreetly look at the houses while disengagement is taking place. Referring to the draft principles documents, Dangott said only three of the ten principles remain unresolved. In particular, Dahlan objects to references to Egypt, claiming that this will anger the Egyptians. Dangott requested USG assistance on this matter. The Ambassador said the USG is asking the Egyptians to notify the GOI directly or through the USG of their agreement to receive the rubble. Dangott said that once the principles are agreed, the GOI would want it signed by MOD DG Amos Yaron, Wolfensohn and Dahlan. He stressed that the three signatures are important, psychologically, for the Palestinians.

4. (C) Dangott said he understands that Wolfensohn is currently in the U.S. seeking agreement for either the World Bank or the European Union to serve as project manager for the demolition. Dangott said he would discuss the issue with the resident European Union representative the evening of August 12. Dangott expressed appreciation for our help, but stressed that the GOI needs a positive answer from the EU or World Bank by August 14. Asked if the UN could serve as project manager in case the EU and World Bank refuse, Dangott replied that the GOI would prefer the that UN not be involved. He explained that Israel's experience with the UN has been difficult, and that the UN would draw in too many actors.

5. (C) Dangott confirmed that the GOI would remove asbestos and other hazardous materials from the settler housing. Referring to the homes in the four West Bank settlements that are to be destroyed, Dangott said that Environment Minister Director General Miki Haran would provide him with information on the buildings the week of August 14. In the meantime, Haran had already told him that there was no asbestos in the private houses -- only in the public, industrial buildings. Dangott said that he had already

passed to Dahlan information on which public buildings would not be razed.

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Gaza Status to be Discussed Bilaterally
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16. (C) Dangott briefly touched on the issue of the source of authority for Gaza, saying it was being discussed bilaterally with the Palestinian Authority. He said the GOI was trying to "push something through," and was confident the issue would be resolved to both sides' satisfaction.

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Passages and Access
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17. (C) Dangott said that he will meet next week with Dahlan to discuss the principles of Rafah access through the present and near term (e.g., while the GOI remains in Philadelphia), and in the future. Discussions on Karni have already started and are moving forward. Dangott expressed frustration, however, that Dahlan appears hesitant to discuss Erez because Dahlan wants to negotiate the border. The GOI is now waiting to hear from Dahlan on issues of technology to improve the passages. Dangott stressed that it was important to move forward on Erez during disengagement, and that it was necessary to "push" Dahlan.

18. (C) The General said the GOI is working on a pilot program for transportation of people and goods between Gaza and the West Bank, and would have it ready within two weeks, for review with the Palestinians. Dangott acknowledged that the Palestinians wanted same-day, door-to-door transport of goods. Time is needed, however, before a door-to-door system could be implemented. The GOI wants to see progress on other issues -- e.g., security issues -- before it starts discussing door-to-door passage with the Palestinian side. Dangott observed that the GOI also has work to do to sort out responsibilities on its side. He said he is trying to get the GOI to agree that the MOD will be responsible for the Karni border crossing.

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The Border
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19. (C) Dangott expressed frustration that Dahlan is always pushing to have the Gaza border issue placed up front as a main issue of discussion. The GOI believes Egypt is behind Dahlan's constant pressure on the matter. Dangott said Israel cannot allow this issue to be turned into something close to "Shebaa Farm" that would be exploited to justify resumption of attacks against Israel from Gaza.

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Greenhouses
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10. (C) The Ambassador said that Wolfensohn had reached agreement with the settlers on the greenhouses. Dangott expressed appreciation for Wolfensohn's assistance, and said he had passed over all the information he had in his database to Wolfensohn. He promised the GOI's help in allowing Palestinians to work at the greenhouses during disengagement.

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Philadelphia Strip
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11. (C) Dangott recounted that the Israeli security cabinet had designed two options for the passage of goods and people from Egypt that preserves Israel's security needs:

(a) The GOI could move the customs and security envelope to the Erez and Karni border crossings.

(b) The GOI could build a border crossing for people and goods in the southeastern corner of Gaza (at Kerem Shalom) in two months, and then eventually connect the border crossing with the airport.

12. (C) Dangott said he is afraid he will not be able to convince Dahlan to choose one of these options. He said Dahlan maintains his preference for goods and people being allowed to move between Gaza and Egypt via the Rafah border crossing. The Israeli side has told Dahlan it needs to keep Rafah secure to (1) prevent crossings into Gaza by Hamas and Islamic Jihad members (Dangott stressed that Israel has information that the PIJ members will cross into Gaza if Rafah is opened.); and (2) keep the security and customs envelope intact. Dangott said that the Israeli side has made it clear that it wants to withdraw from Philadelphia as soon as possible. This hinges, however, on concluding an agreement with the Egyptians on deploying their 750 border guards. Dangott said that while negotiations are being

finalized, he had doubts that the Knesset will confirm the agreement. The General said he will need to further discuss the agreement with the Egyptians, and that the earliest it could be presented to the Knesset would be within two weeks.

13. (C) Dangott said he would meet Palestinian Minister of Interior Nasir Yusif August 14 to discuss how Palestinian security forces will deploy on the eve of disengagement. He stressed that the Palestinians must deploy their forces on August 14, as the Israeli forces will be deployed August 15. Dahlan told Dangott that he is building a 20,000-man security force. Dangott's impression was that Nasir Yusif was not involved in the issue; consequently, the GOI had few expectations this would occur.

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Status of West Bank Evacuated Areas
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14. (C) Responding to the Ambassador's question about the status of the northern West Bank areas that will be evacuated as a result of disengagement, Dangott said their status would change, in effect, from Area B possibly to "Area B Plus." The General stressed that this is a question to be decided by the GOI. He noted, however, that the area in question is very small, and that concerns about its status -- from NGOs and Palestinians -- are essentially unfounded. He said the IDF has no intention of remaining in the area, and that the GOI will not stop projects that NGOs coordinate with General Mishlev. Dangott said that, on the Palestinian side, the status issue is being raised by Dahlan only -- Nasir Yusif is "not aware of it." Dangott said the matter is not "worth raising," as the GOI will cooperate with any friendly partner in the area, and believes the status of the area will change if Palestinian security performance is positive.

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